

the judge. The transcript shall not include argument or debate thereon except as ordered by the judge. The ruling of the judge on any objection shall be a part of the transcript. Only objections made before the judge may subsequently be relied upon in the proceeding.

(3) *Proof and authentication of official records or documents.* An official record or document, when admissible for any purpose, shall be admissible as evidence without the production of the person who made or prepared the same. Such record or document shall, in the discretion of the judge, be evidenced by an official publication thereof or by a copy attested by the person having legal custody thereof and accompanied by a certificate that such person has the custody.

(4) *Exhibits.* All written statements, charts, tabulations, or similar data offered in evidence at the hearing shall, after identification by the proponent and upon satisfactory showing of the authenticity, relevancy, and materiality of the contents thereof, be numbered as exhibits and received in evidence and made a part of the record. Such exhibits shall be submitted in quadruplicate and in documentary form. In case the required number of copies is not made available, the judge shall exercise his discretion as to whether said exhibits shall, when practicable, be read in evidence or whether additional copies shall be required to be submitted within a time to be specified by the judge. If the testimony of a witness refers to a statute, or to a report or document (including the record of any previous hearing) the judge, after inquiry relating to the identification of such statute, report, or document, shall determine whether the same shall be produced at the hearing and physically be made a part of the evidence as an exhibit, or whether it shall be incorporated into the evidence by reference. If relevant and material matter offered in evidence is embraced in a report or document (including the record of any previous hearing) containing immaterial or irrelevant matter, such immaterial or irrelevant matter shall be excluded and shall be segregated insofar as practicable, subject

to the direction of the presiding officer.

(5) *Official notice.* Official notice may be taken of such matters as are judicially noticed by the courts of the United States and of any other matter of technical, scientific or commercial fact of established character: *Provided*, That interested persons shall be given adequate notice, at the hearing or subsequent thereto, of matters so noticed and shall be given adequate opportunity to show that such facts are inaccurate or are erroneously noticed.

(6) *Offer of proof.* Whenever evidence is excluded from the record, the party offering such evidence may make an offer of proof, which shall be included in the transcript. The offer of proof shall consist of a brief statement describing the evidence to be offered. If the evidence consists of a brief oral statement or of an exhibit, it shall be inserted into the transcript in toto. In such event, it shall be considered a part of the transcript if the Secretary decides that the judge's ruling in excluding the evidence was erroneous. The judge shall not allow the insertion of such evidence in toto if the taking of such evidence will consume a considerable length of time at the hearing. In the latter event, if the Secretary decides that the judge erred in excluding the evidence, and that such error was substantial, the hearing shall be reopened to permit the taking of such evidence.

[25 FR 5907, June 28, 1960, as amended at 37 FR 1103, Jan. 25, 1972]

§ 900.9 Oral and written arguments.

(a) *Oral argument before judge.* Oral argument before the judge shall be in the discretion of the judge. Such argument, when permitted, may be limited by the judge to any extent that he finds necessary for the expeditious disposition of the proceeding and shall be reduced to writing and made part of the transcript.

(b) *Briefs, proposed findings and conclusions.* The judge shall announce at the hearing a reasonable period of time within which interested persons may file with the hearing clerk proposed findings and conclusions, and written arguments or briefs, based upon the

Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA

§ 900.12

evidence received at the hearing, citing, where practicable, the page or pages of the transcript of the testimony where such evidence appears. Factual material other than that adduced at the hearing or subject to official notice shall not be alluded to therein, and, in any case, shall not be considered in the formulation of the marketing agreement or marketing order. If the person filing a brief desires the Secretary to consider any objection made by such person to a ruling of the judge, as provided in § 900.8(d), he shall include in the brief a concise statement concerning each such objection, referring where practicable, to the pertinent pages of the transcript.

§ 900.10 Certification of the transcript.

The judge shall notify the hearing clerk of the close of a hearing as soon as possible thereafter and of the time for filing written arguments, briefs, proposed findings and proposed conclusions, and shall furnish the hearing clerk with such other information as may be necessary. As soon as possible after the hearing, the judge shall transmit to the hearing clerk an original and three copies of the transcript of the testimony and the original and all copies of the exhibits not already on file in the office of the hearing clerk. He shall attach to the original transcript of testimony his certificate stating that, to the best of his knowledge and belief, the transcript is a true transcript of the testimony given at the hearing except in such particulars as he shall specify; and that the exhibits transmitted are all the exhibits as introduced at the hearing with such exceptions as he shall specify. A copy of such certificate shall be attached to each of the copies of the transcript of testimony. In accordance with such certificate the hearing clerk shall note upon the official record copy, and cause to be noted on other copies, of the transcript each correction detailed therein by adding or crossing out (but without obscuring the text as originally transcribed) at the appropriate place any words necessary to make the same conform to the correct meaning, as certified by the judge. The hearing clerk shall obtain and file certifications to the effect that such correc-

tions have been effected in copies other than the official record copy.

§ 900.11 Copies of the transcript.

(a) During the period in which the proceeding has an active status in the Department, a copy of the transcript and exhibits shall be kept on file in the office of the hearing clerk, where it shall be available for examination during official hours of business. Thereafter said transcript and exhibits shall be made available by the hearing clerk for examination during official hours of business after prior request and reasonable notice to the hearing clerk.

(b) Transcripts of hearings shall be made available to any person at actual cost of duplication.

[25 FR 5907, June 28, 1960, as amended at 67 FR 10829, Mar. 11, 2002]

§ 900.12 Administrator's recommended decision.

(a) *Preparation.* As soon as practicable following the termination of the period allowed for the filing of written arguments or briefs and proposed findings and conclusions the Administrator shall file with the hearing clerk a recommended decision.

(b) *Contents.* The Administrator's recommended decision shall include: (1) A preliminary statement containing a description of the history of the proceedings, a brief explanation of the material issues of fact, law, or discretion presented on the record, and proposed findings and conclusions with respect to such issues as well as the reasons or basis therefor; (2) a ruling upon each proposed finding or conclusion submitted by interested persons, and (3) an appropriate proposed marketing agreement or marketing order effectuating his recommendations.

(c) *Exceptions to recommended decision.* Immediately following the filing of his recommended decision, the Administrator shall give notice thereof, and opportunity to file exceptions thereto by publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER. Within a period of time specified in such notice any interested person may file with the hearing clerk exceptions to the Administrator's proposed marketing agreement or marketing order, or both, as the case may be, and a brief